

Judicial Performance Evaluation

Alaska

Scope. In 1975, Alaska became the first state to establish an official program for evaluating judicial performance. Since 1976, all judges and justices have been evaluated prior to standing for retention.

Commission. The Alaska Judicial Council (AJC) administers the JPE program. The AJC consists of seven members—three attorneys appointed by the Alaska Bar Association, three non-attorneys appointed by the Governor with legislative confirmation, and the Chief Justice, who serves as the chair. The six non-judicial members serve staggered, six-year terms. Members must come from different parts of the state and are appointed without regard to political affiliation.

Criteria. The AJC evaluates judges based on five criteria, including legal ability, impartiality, integrity, temperament, and diligence.

Data collection. The AJC surveys all active and inactive members of the Alaska Bar Association; peace and probation officers in the state who handle state criminal cases; all court employees; jurors who have served with the judges; and social workers, guardians ad litem, and child advocates. In addition, the AJC interviews evaluated judges, examines recusal and peremptory challenge records, and sends questionnaires to counsel who participated in significant cases identified by the judge during the review period. The AJC also takes into account independent observations of judicial performance by the non-profit organization Alaska Judicial Observers, and holds public hearings on judges standing for retention to solicit citizen input.

Dissemination. A summary of evaluation results and a retention recommendation for each judge are included in the Lieutenant Governor's Official Election Pamphlet. Detailed evaluation results are posted on the AJC's website.

Website. <http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/retention/retent.html>